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AUTHOR Enlow, George; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Records maintained by rural extension designees on the Missouri Small Farm Family Program, (initiated in 1972 by the cooperative extension service to help low income farm families learn to use available resources to improve their quality of life) provided data re: family characteristics, farm improvement progress, and improvement in the quality of life of participating families. About half of the heads of household and homemakers were 45 years old or less and had at least a high school education: approximately one-third of the reporting families had 5-10 years of farming experience, and the head of household also had off-the-farm employment. In order to increase income, most families had to expand present enterprises or add new ones. Raising swine and beef cows, dairying, and improving land use for hay and pasturing were among the primary enterprises. Forty percent of the families increased their net income, worth and savings over the previous year, indicating that better management can increase income. Improvement in the quality of life was appraised by assessing the increase in home gardening, which reduced food costs, improved diet and health, and provided enjoyable family activities; and the improvement of family resources, which increased food preservation and production, improved farm and home record management, and promoted home weatherization practices. (JD)

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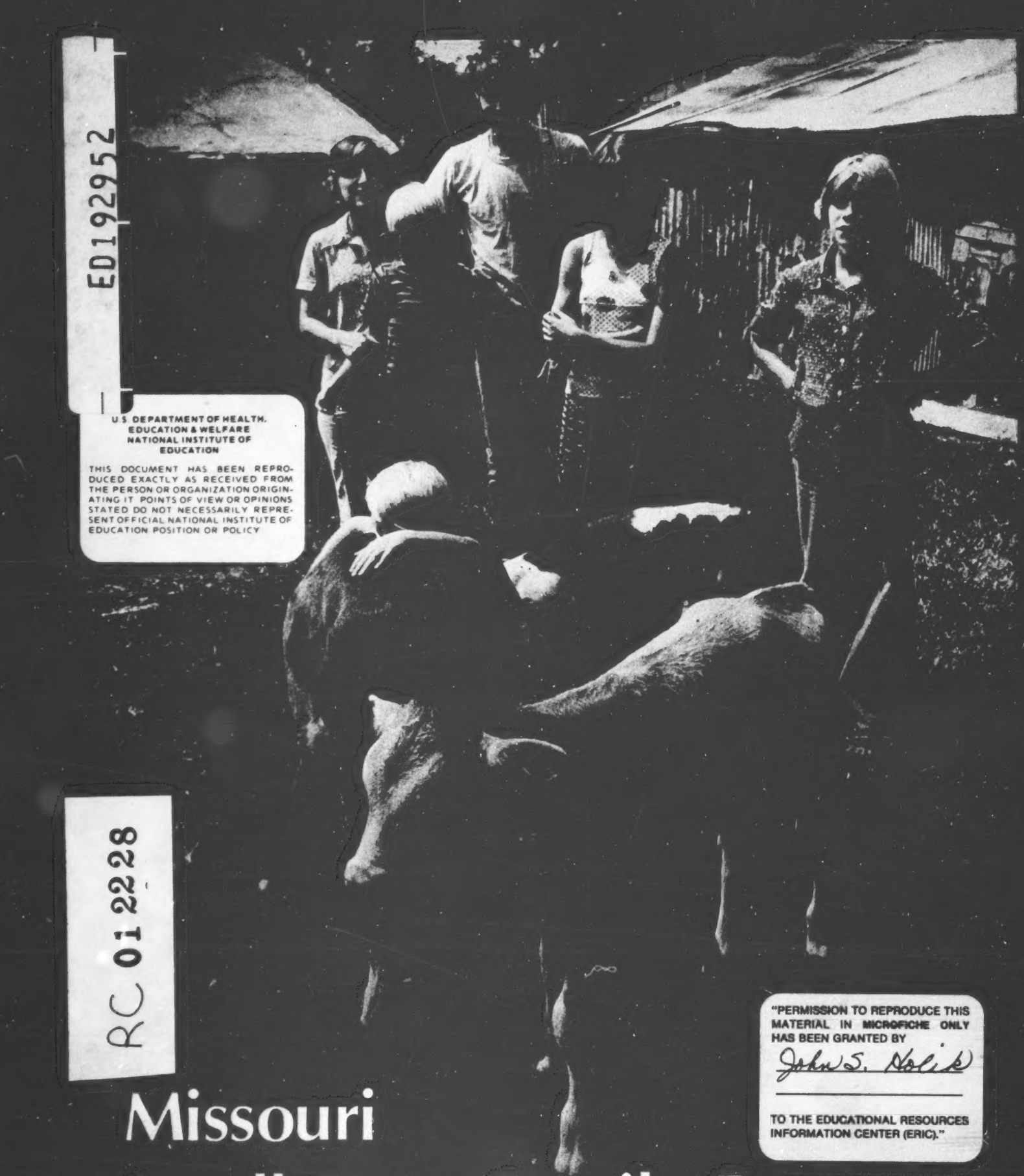

Missouri Small Farm Family Program

2

Introduction

The objective of the Missouri Small Farm Family Program is to help families obtain a better quality of life.

Currently 2000 families participating in the Small Farm Family Program have the opportunity to learn and apply skills in the areas of home horticulture, farm and home record keeping, home weatherization, home food production and preservation; agriculture technology and management.

The families reflected in this publication are examples of success that families participating in the Small Farm Family Program are experiencing.

We are proud that the Missouri Cooperative Extension staff have helped to make these successes possible and that many families have benefited.

Much credit for the program's success must go to the dedicated input of the Extension Educational Assistants, the cooperation of federal, state and local agencies and organizations, and most importantly the many fine small farm families that have and are participating in the program.

Mortimer Neufville
Associate Dean
Lincoln University

Thomas G. Brown
Director Agricultural
Extension Programs

Cover
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Williams and children, John, 8, Stephen, 9, Kechia, 15, and Kerry, 14, on their farm near Walnut Grove, MO

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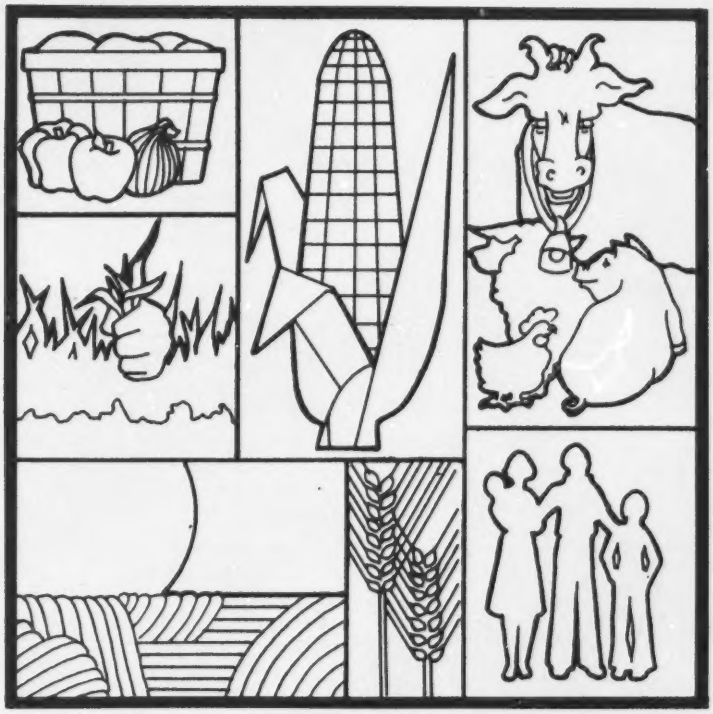

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Charles Parker, education assistant, Wayne Young and O. L. Robertson, area livestock specialist, Laclede county, discuss the feeder-pig business on the Young farm.

Background Leading to Current Program

The majority of Missouri farm families live on small farms. Small farmers gross less than $20,000 a year in farm sales. The 1974 Census of Agriculture reported 115, 711 farms in Missouri and 75 percent of these farms had annual sales of less than $20,000. Records kept by farm families show that 70 to 80 percent of farm sales were spent for farm production expenses. Assuming no other income, many of these families would have a net income of about $4,000 per year.

Extension staff started a program designed for families living on small farms in 1971. Local education assistants were employed to work with interested families who needed more income and were not currently involved in regular Extension programs.

In early 1976, two important program components were added: family resource management and home gardening. The name was changed to the Small Farm Family Program in order to reflect the emphasis on families.

In order to assure home economics program linkage, the Director of Home Economics Extension Programs with area directors assigned an area home economist to each program planning unit. The home economists work with the agricultural designees in giving leadership to the program at the area level.

Before the Small Farm Family Program started, needs and interests of families living on small farms were identified in each county. A survey was conducted under the leadership of area Extension staff to determine management practices and needs of families living on small farms. This information determined the basis for the Small Farm Family Program.

Leadership for program development and implementation for family resource management, home weatherization and maintenance, and home gardening come from Lincoln University. Leadership for program development and implementation for agricultural production and management come from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Objectives of the Small Farm Family Program

The objective of the Small Farm Family Program is to assist families living on small farms, not currently participating in Extension programs, to use available resources to improve their quality of living.

This objective is to be reached by education assistants helping families improve their economic and social well being by increasing their knowledge and skills in agricultural technology and management, the management of family resources and home gardening.

Program Thrusts for 1977:

State and area Extension staff included these thrusts for the 1977 Missouri Small Farm Family Program.

1. Education assistants involve 45-50 individual families not currently participating in Extension programs in a discussion about their goals.
2. Knowledge and skills of education assistants be increased enabling them to assist families on small farms in improving their quality of living. Areas to be emphasized are agriculture technology; family resource management and home gardening.
3. Knowledge and skills of the agriculture and home economics designees be increased in order for them to be more effective educational managers.
4. To assure program progress, the State Small Farm Family committee develop a systematic plan for program evaluation in support of program expansion.
5. Area and state Extension staff, Extension Council members, and other community leaders be informed about the accomplishments of the Small Farm Family Program.

Some Family Characteristics

About one-half of the participating heads of households were less than 45 years old. (See Table 1) Thirty-nine percent of the heads of households were between 45 and 64 years old. The remaining 11 percent were over 65 years of age. The proportion of homemakers in the three age categories was almost identical, with less than one percent more in the two younger age categories.

Twenty-six percent of the participating heads of households had not completed high school, while 61.5 percent had a high school education and another 12.5 percent had some schooling beyond high school. (See Table 2) Again, as in the age distribution, the homemakers were quite similar to the heads of households. Among the homemakers 26.4

Minnie and Sullivan Clark, Small Farm family, of Essex, MO

Table 1: Age Distribution of Participating Family Members Reporting

Age	Head of Household Number	Head of Household Percent	Homemaker Number	Homemaker Percent
Less than 46 years of age	911	49.9	921	50.6
46-64 years	716	39.2	703	38.7
65 or over	198	10.9	195	10.7
Total	1825	100.0	1819	100.0

Table 2: Amount of Education of Participating Family Members Reporting

Amount of Education	Head of Household Number	Head of Household Percent	Homemaker Number	Homemaker Percent
Less than high school	467	26.0	461	26.4
High school	1105	61.5	1054	60.3
More than high school	226	12.5	233	13.3
Total	1798	100.0	1748	100.0

Table 3: Years of Farming Experience of Participating Families Reporting

Years of Experience	Number	Percent
Less than 5 years	606	32.2
5-10 years	646	34.3
Over 10 years	629	33.5
Total	1881	100.0

percent had less than a high school education; 60.3 percent had completed high school and 13.3 percent had gone to school beyond high school graduation.

About 32.2 percent of the participating families had less than five years of farming experience. (See Table 3) Another 34.3 percent had 5 to 10 years of experience and the rest, 33.4 percent, had farmed more than 10 years.

Probably the most interesting characteristic of the participant families is the small proportion of full-time farmers—25.7 percent. (See Table 4) In 23.7 percent of the households both the head of household and spouse worked off the farm. In another 36.7 percent of the participant families only the head of household worked off the farm, while the spouse only worked off the farm in the remaining 13.9 percent.

Families who have participated in the program two or more years is 11 percent. This figure is low due to the fact that the program in seven of the eleven areas has been in operation less than two years. In the four areas where this program has been in operation since 1972, 27 percent of the families have participated two or more years.

For the eleven areas 42.7 percent of the families have been in the program less than a year and 45.3 percent have participated almost two years. In the four areas where the program has been in operation since 1972, 37 percent have participated less than a year and another 36 percent one to two years.

Table 4: Participating Families Reporting Off the Farm Employment

Household Member Holding Off The Farm Job	Number	Percent
Both head of household and spouse	436	23.7
Head of household only	674	36.7
Homemaker only	255	13.9
Neither head of household or spouse work off the farm	473	25.7
Total	1838	100.0

Table 5: Change in Family Income[1]

1977 Compared to Previous Year	Number of Families	Average Increase Per Family
Increase in total gross income[2]	717	$1,047
Increase in total net income	670	454
Decrease in total net income	151	515
Increase in net worth	443	914

[1]Estimates made by education assistants from information obtained from participating families.
[2]Includes both farm receipts and gross off-farm wages.

Steve Williams and son

Table 6: Families With Swine Enterprise

	Number
Number with sows	614
Average number sows per farm	10.5
Number increasing sow herd	265
Average number sows added per farm	6.6
Number increasing number pigs weaned per litter	259
Additional number pigs weaned per litter	1.5
Number who increased income by selling pigs on better market outlet	153

Ron Abernathy talks about farrowing crates made out of native oak lumber from an old barn.

Farm Improvement Progress

The goal of most families is not necessarily to become larger farmers, but to earn more income so they can improve their quality of living.

Some increase in farm income can be obtained by doing a better job with the present operation. But for most families to earn more income means the expansion of an enterprise or the addition of a new enterprise. In either case, careful planning should be done by each family before making major capital investments. The Extension Small Farm Family Program assists these families as they discuss plans with their education assistants.

Farm enterprise data and changes made by participating families in the Small Farm Family Program were reported by area Extension staff and education assistants.

Much of this progress was possible because of the support by local agricultural agencies and organizations to small farm families.

Swine Enterprise:

1. 614 families or one-third of all participating families had sows in 1977. They averaged 10.5 sows per farm.
2. 43 percent of those with sows added 6.6 sows per farm during the year. These extra sows should add $3,600 more gross income per farm if each sow raised a dozen 40-pound feeder pigs each year. Additional net income above cash expenses would amount to $1,300 per farm.[1]
3. 42 percent of the families who had sows were able to save and wean an additional 1.5 pigs per litter. An extra 1.5 feeder pig saved and marketed per litter per year results in $34 more income per sow above cash costs. On 10 sows, this is an additional $340 net income per year.

Beef Cow Enterprise:

1. 766 or 42 percent of all participating families had beef cows in 1977 with an average of 17 cows per farm.
2. During the year, over one-fourth of these families increased herd size by five cows per farm. This was a good time for

[1]Based on budget data in the Missouri Farm Planning Handbook, revised June 1978.

many of these families to increase cow numbers. Five extra beef cows could provide $1,100 to $1,400 additional gross income per farm.

3. One-fifth of the small farmers with beef cows reported increasing calf weaning weights by 25 pounds per calf. At current prices this increased weight was worth about $15 per head. If this extra weight were achieved on all calves, it would increase gross income by about $300 per farm.
4. Over three-fourths of the beef cow producers sold their calves on the best available market in their area. In many cases, this was a local cooperative feeder calf sale.

Dairy Enterprise:

1. 152 or 8 percent reported dairying as an enterprise beyond a family milk cow. They had an average of 24 cows during 1977.
2. 43 percent of those with dairy cows increased herd size by nine cows during the year. This will provide an increase of $7,000 to $9,000 gross income per farm. Net income over cash costs could be increased by $1,500 to $2,000 per farm.
3. One-third of the dairymen increased milk production by 384 pounds per cow compared to the previous year. With milk at $9 per hundred pounds, this would result in $35 more gross income per cow. On a herd of 24 cows, this could be $840 additional gross income per dairy farm.
4. Some families raise dairy feeder calves as a source of income. 84 families reported raising an average of 12 dairy feeder calves in 1977. This was an average of 4 more per farm than the previous year. If these feeder calves were worth $165 per head, this would add $660 more gross income per farm.

Land Use:

1. One-fourth of all participating families had two soil samples tested during the year. This was the first time that some families had had a soil test made.
2. One-third of all families raised 25 percent more hay and pasture than the year before. Part of this increase was due to a favorable season, but part of the increased yields was due to use of plant food and better grazing practices.
3. 245 or 13 percent of all families established an average of 11 acres improved pasture during 1977. Some families participated for the first time in county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service programs on cost-sharing for establishment of improved pasture. With a good stand and under normal seasons, this should provide hay and pasture for three to four head of mature cattle.

Family Income Changes:

The estimated income changes of families participating in the Small Farm Family Program reflects both the farm business and off-farm sources of income.

The following data represents estimates of the change in family income in 1977 compared to the year before.

1. 40 percent of all participating families or 717 families had an increase in total gross income averaging $1,047 per family in 1977. This amounts to $750,699 more total gross income for these 717 participating families.
2. 37 percent or 670 families had an average of $454 more total net income for 1977. This amounts to $304,180 more net income for these families.
3. 151 or about 9 percent of families had a decrease in total net income averaging $515 per family.
4. 443 or about one-fourth of all families net worth increased by $914 per family. Changes in net worth are in addition to income changes reported.
5. 522 or 28 percent of the families had a total savings averaging $270 per family over the previous year on family living expense items such as food, clothing, heating, shelter, and transportation.

The income changes these families achieved in 1977 indicates that families living on small farms who have relatively low farm sales and off-farm income can obtain more income by better management.

Forty percent of the families in 1977 increased their net income, net worth and savings by $850,000. It is expected that more of these families will have increased income next year from additional enterprises.

Ralph Ross, education assistant, and Ron Abernathy check tomato plants.

Improving the Quality of Life

Home Gardening

Federal funds for home gardening assist small, part-time and limited resource farm families. The objectives of this phase of the Small Farm Family Program in Missouri are to

1. Assist families in acquiring the necessary skills to provide their own food.
2. Reduce food costs through greater production, preservation and sale of vegetables.
3. Improve the diet by selecting and planting those vegetables with a high nutritional value.

The gardening effort of the program is carried out by education assistants with technical assistance from area and state staff.

Many questions are being raised about growing vegetables. The one question that is asked the most is, "Do you save money?" For some, the answer is yes, but for better health, and enjoyment derived from this endeavor there is an even greater savings.

In reviewing the gardening activities of the small farm families cost savings were realized. One hundred and thirteen families were gardening for the first time. Gardening skills such as testing the soil and pruning tomatoes, were acquired. Of the 1,835 families taking part in the gardening program, a total of 131,113 quarts of food were produced and preserved which is $52,445 worth of food.

The involvement in home gardening is increasing yearly. Families are learning how to meet their nutritional needs through selection of vegetables with high nutritional value and having fun using gardening as a family activity.

Management of Family Resources

The program centers around 11 area home economics designees and their area extension home economics co-workers teaching subject matter information and educational methods to 47 education assistants.

Home economics topics emphasized during 1977 were

1. Management and decision-making skills needed for successful intergration of farm and home production skills such as home food production and preservation.
2. Management of realistic record-keeping skills for families living on small

farms to analyze efficient use of human and other available resources.

3. Practical home weatherization skills needed by families to conserve energy, save money in fuel bills, and improve their environment.

The 11 area home economics designees taught the education assistants and families how to apply basic skills to increase purchasing power or better manage available resources.

Food Preservation and Production

The home food production and preservation are an integral part of the program. The program assists families with food production and reducing food costs through increased preservation or the sale of vegetables.

In one of the program units 56 families produced a total of 22,400 pounds of meat for consumption or $11,200 worth of food. This does not include the number of families who had venison, rabbit, squirrels, other wild meat, or fish.

Farm and Home Record Management

In a farm home, the record-keeping assumes a dual role in evaluating living and farm business expenses. During 1977, 192 families began keeping a written record of these expenses. Education assistants encouraged families to inventory their resources and 1,245 families discussed goals that were in line with their available resources.

In one program unit, all of the education assistants established a farm and home business center and filing system including a written record of family living expenses. Ninety-eight percent of the program families discussed future family goals with their education assistant.

Sullivan Clark Jr. displays awards he received in recognition of his agricultural projects.

Home Weatherization

Home weatherization practices were used by 489 families. Cost savings ranged from $18 to $310 per family during 1977.

Five families in one area installed wood-burning heating stoves and used wood from their farm at a savings of about $370 per family per year. Records from another area indicate that 40 families installed the stoves and had a savings of $75 per month per family.

Eight hundred and eighty-nine families participating in the program learned to repair door and window screens, replace electrical receptacles or plugs, and repair leaky faucets. The total cost savings realized by these families is estimated to be $8,890.

Progress Indicators

Information presented in this report is based on records (EP-202, EP-203, EP-204, and EP-205) maintained by home economics and agriculture designees and the Small Farm Family education assistants. The purpose of these records was to chart the progress of program families and determine indicators of program effectiveness.

Rita Bader, education assistant, and Bill Purnell, youth specialist, Bootheel area, on the Clark farm near Essex, MO.

Donna and David Fonda, Small Farm family, with Gerald Whitener

What Education Assistants Do

Education assistants work with families living on small farms who are not currently participating in Extension programs. They invite them to participate in the local Small Farm Family Program.

What the assistants do varies greatly depending upon interest and needs of each family. It usually includes the following:

- Get acquainted with the family.
- Learn about the families interests, problems and future plans.
- Acquaint them with various agencies and organizations in the county that may be able to help them.
- Become familiar with the resources each family has to work with.
- Discuss improvements and changes that can increase income or reduce costs.
- Help each family to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to work toward their family goals.
- Encourage families to participate in other Extension activities.
- Increase skills in ag technology, resource management and home horticulture.

Staff

Agriculturalists and home economists have joint responsibilities for the Small Farm Family Program in each extension program planning unit.

The following extension specialists and education assistants are currently working with the Small Farm Family Program:

Bootheel Area

Area Specialists
Bill Purnell
Rebecca Teuber

Education Assistants
Rita L. Bader
Sam Huey
Mary Keene
Matt L. Kronz

D.O.W. Area

Area Specialists
Jerry Freeze
Cheryll Reitmeier

Education Assistants
Jim Byrd
Larry Dean Tucker
Noel Elliott

Green Hills Area

Area Specialists
Ron Stoller
Bess Howard

Education Assistants
Lewis Harbert
Richard Jessen
Frederick Preston
Jay L. Ross

H.O.S.T. Area

Area Specialists
Karl Wickstrom
Marge Slayton

Education Assistants
Wayne Derryberry
Harding Grooms

Kaysinger Area

Area Specialists
John Calhoun
Cathy Dierking

Education Assistants
William Johnson
William E. Roberts

Lakes Country Area

Area Specialists
Larry Jenkins
Elizabeth Scannell

Education Assistants
Mary Y. Andreatte
Doyle Mayfield
John W. Tucker
Norris B. Tummons

Lake of the Ozarks Area

Area Specialists
Jerry Freeze
Donna Plummer

Education Assistants
Winford Ash
Cliffie Chalfant
Debra Edison
Doris Hite
Janet McKeever
Charles Parker
Joan Pline
Virginia Ross
Jean Volmert
Billy Wagner
Joe Windes

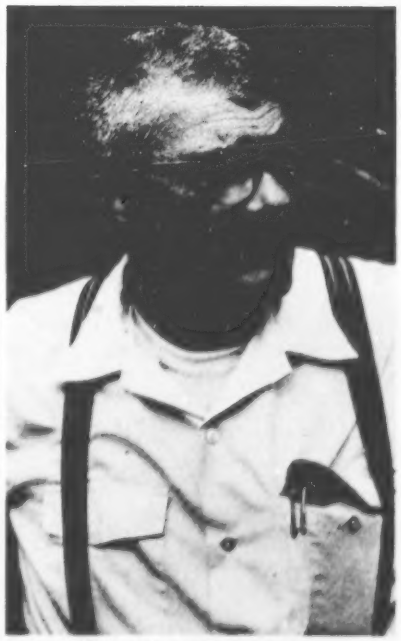
Meramec Area

Area Specialists
Frank Letzkus
Doris Greig

Education Assistants
Lawrence Akers
Harold Isaak

Northeast Area

Area Specialists
Joe McVeigh
Glenda Hawkins



Don Griffith, education assistant

Education Assistants
Dale Barker
Donald Griffith
Homer E. Rogers

Ozark Foothills Area

Area Specialists
Roy Hager
Phyllis Flanigan

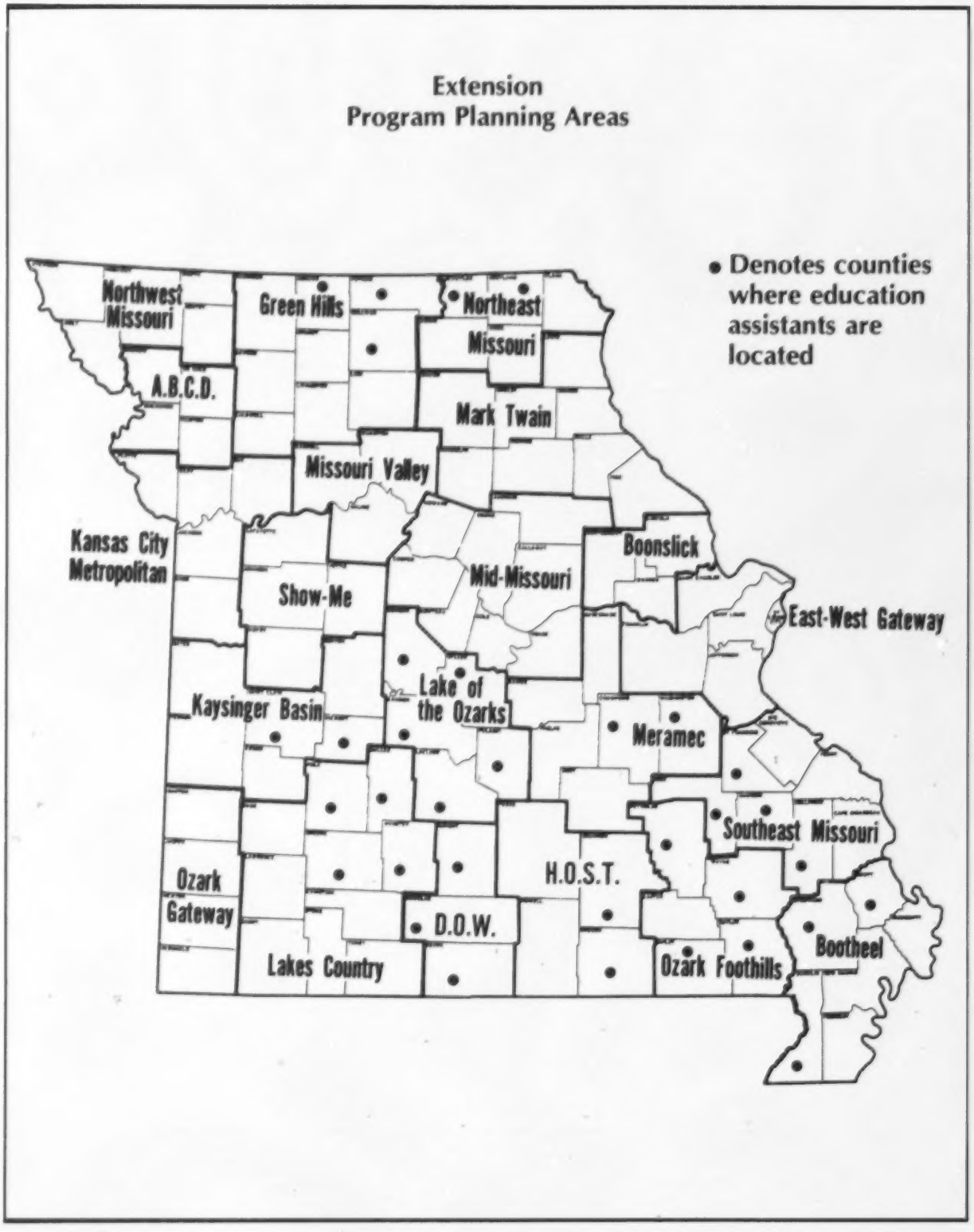
Education Assistants
Jack Crofford
Melvin Hovis
Charles Moore
David Mobley
Ralph Ross
Bill Williams

Southeast Area

Area Specialists
Kim Kennedy
Alice Crites

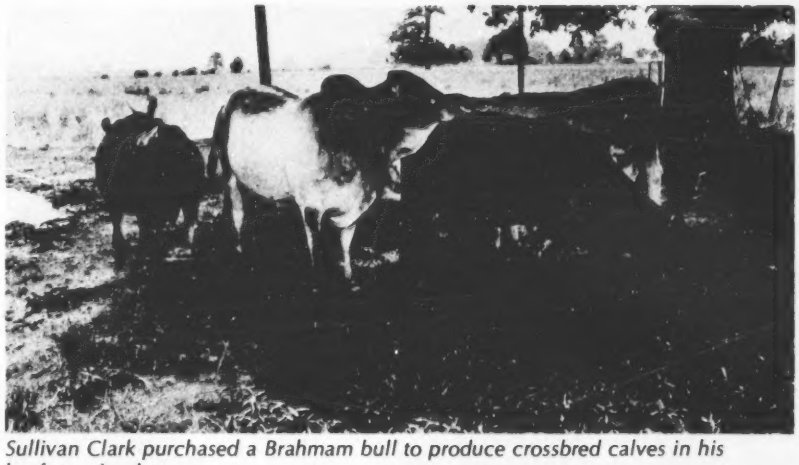
Education Assistants
Jim Arnold
Stanley Beussink
Tina Bales
Donald Ray Montgomery
Gerald Whitener
Cecil G. Yoder

Missouri Small Farm Family Program



Sullivan Clark family of Essex, MO

Small Farm Family Profiles



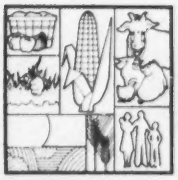
Sullivan Clark purchased a Brahmam bull to produce crossbred calves in his beef-cow herd.

Each of the Extension areas participating in the Small Farm Family Program nominated one family for this publication. The State Small Farm Family Program Committee and Extension Information staff selected the families that are featured in this publication. Selection was based upon family goals and progress made toward achieving these goals, age of family, and distribution over the state.

Families included were

- Mr. and Mrs. Steve Williams and family, Walnut Grove, MO.
- Minnie and Sullivan Clark and family, Essex, MO.
- Jean and Wayne Young and family, Stoutland, MO.
- Louis and Margaret Neuburger, Goodson, MO.
- Ron and Margaret Abernathy, Piedmont, MO.
- Bill and Lorraine Spears, Glenwood, MO.
- David and Donna Fonda, Grassy, MO.

Jean and Wayne Young



Wayne and Jean Young with children, John and Judy

Wayne Young adjusts a chain to move the farrowing house.

Jean Young records baby pigs' weights.

Young Family Enhances Meaning of Togetherness

The Young children share responsibilities.

John Young showers a hot sow.

When Jean and Wayne Young say they're running a family farm they mean it. The 92-acre feeder-pig operation near Stoutland, MO., is run by the couple and their three children still at home, David, 16, John, 13, and Judy, 10.

Jean says, "We just couldn't make it if it wasn't for the kids doing all the things they do. We're all working together. It's not just one person bossing everyone else. We've all got our things to do."

Jeans calls Judy the "chief cook and bottle washer." She does half the housework including washing the clothes and the dishes, dusting, and sweeping. She cooks as well, and her specialty is beans and biscuits.

The older son works in town so the family can invest in more gilts while his younger brother works with the pigs including helping his mother clip tails of baby pigs and caring for sows. The two younger ones also nurse orphan pigs.

"An accident four years ago leaves Wayne laid up part of the time," Jean said. "He teaches the kids how to weld and how to put machinery together and instructs them to do what their mother tells them."

The family moved to Camden County in early 1977 from New Mexico. Jean's grandparents had homesteaded in Missouri and she had often heard her father speak of the state.

"We were sitting in New Mexico after Wayne's accident trying to figure out what to do," said Jean. "I said I'd rather go back to a farm in Missouri and try to make a living than to work eight hours for somebody else and come home to housework and the kids grouching."

They made three trips to Missouri before they chose this land. Jean said they decided to raise pigs "because it was the fastest way of getting into farming and making a living. This way I can sell pigs and put part of it back each time I sell pigs and keep building."

"When we got here there was only a house and shed," Jean explained. They have added pens and fences along with farrowing houses and are now building a new shop.

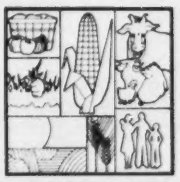
They got their first pig in June 1977, from a neighbor to raise on a bottle because the mother had too many. In August of that year they bought 32 gilts and three bred sows which started them in business. They have 75 sows now and hope eventually to have about 100.

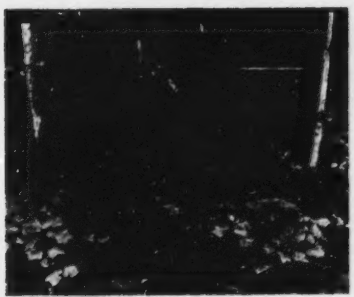
They say the Small Farm Family Program has helped them tremendously. "Charlie Parker, education assistant for the Small Farm Family Program came out here and showed us how to cut needle teeth and ear tag, what to do for mange and lice, and helped us with the pasture," Jean said. "We'd have a problem and wonder what was going to happen. The kids and I bug him to death, picking his brains every time he comes out here."

Cliffie Chalfant, another education assistant, is helping the family set up a bookkeeping system and learn more about canning and drying. They have recently purchased a food dehydrator and dried 209 quarts of fruits and vegetables.

Besides helping with the regular work, the children each have their own special animals they take care of. "The older boy has two pigs, Acapulco and Atrocious," Jean says. "He was told to pick a gilt out of the 32 that were bred but had to choose before they farrowed. He took three days to make his decision. He had to take his chances just like Mom's doing."

Louis and Margaret Neuburger





Cucumbers border the Neuburger's garden.

Their compost pile is one of the secrets to the success of the garden. Composted straw enriches the garden soil.

New potatoes are one of many vegetable crops.

Norris Tummons, education assistant, discusses raspberry mosaic with Louis Neuburger.

Louis Neuburger says he and his wife built the ramp for older visitors.

Neuburgers Profit From Organic Gardening

Louis and Margaret Neuburger have just finished building the home they began three years ago. He's laid the foundation for the house next door. And these are just their spare-time projects; the real work is in the organic garden. Louis is 76, his wife, Margaret, is 70.

Louis was in the shoe business for 47 years before he began farming. He and Margaret were married ten years ago and moved to Ava, MO. They came to Polk County five years ago.

"When we first bought this place it was nothing but brush and an old house," said Margaret. They tore down the old house and saved the lumber. "We've thought about making a chicken house. I'd like to have about 14 hens."

"When we began the new house, Margaret carried all the shingles up on the roof for me to put on. And we dug a basement by hand," Louis explained. "The other day I made 24 mixings of concrete to finish the ramp off the front porch."

"We started the garden the first year we got here. My brother-in-law gave us our first raspberries, and then we sent off for some and just kept adding," Margaret said. They now sell raspberries, strawberries, and other garden crops. "We picked 240 quarts of strawberries and sold most of them."

"They get a dollar a quart for them, already picked," said Norris Tummons education assistant for the Small Farm Family Program who visits them regularly.

"He uses mulch for cultivation," Norris explained. "He puts it between the rows to keep down the weeds and conserve moisture."

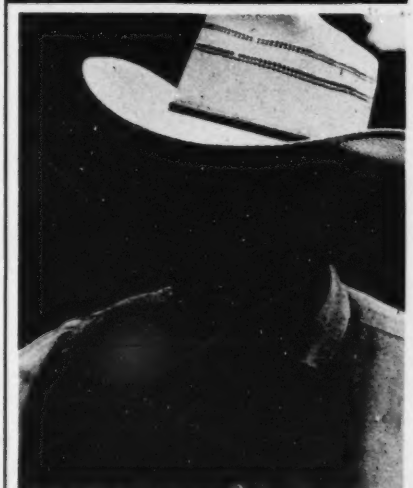
"We put just about everything in here," says Louis, "When we tore down the old house we had so much—old shingles and everything—we just busted them up and put them in here."

The Small Farm Family program has helped the Neuburgers deal with grasshoppers and raspberry mosaic, as well as other farm problems. Norris also brings canning bulletins to Margaret who uses them to help fill their basement with fruit and vegetables.

The Neuburgers have farmed organically for many years. "Louis didn't believe in it until he got awfully sick. The doctors gave him up, so he went on juices and vegetables. He won't eat meat. I eat meat once in a while, but not much," explained Margaret.

"I keep on drinking carrot juice and look at the life it's given me," Louis said. "I got rid of my arthritis. I wonder about people that say, 'Who wants to live to be 80 or 90 years old?' Well, I want to live to be 750."

"I wish everybody would go out and get a little acreage like this and forget about trying to be millionaires."



At 76, Louis Neuburger credits good diet for continued good health.

Lorraine and Bill Spears gave up off-the-farm jobs to start farming.

Spears Family Trades City Jobs For Feeder-Pig Business

"We didn't have anything but the ground when we started," said Bill Spears of his farm operation near Lancaster, MO. He and his wife, Lorraine, now have 30 sows for their feeder-pig business, six cows, 52 acres of corn and 50 acres of beans.

"Bill and Lorraine have gone a lot faster than others," said Don Griffith, educational assistant for the Small Farm Family Program, who visits them regularly. "They work 16 hours a day, from 4 a.m. to 10 at night."

They moved a trailer to the farm to live in, built hog houses and fences all in the last two years. For a thousand dollars, they built three hog houses that can be manuvered anywhere.

On their small farm, the Spearses have kept expenses low. They bought a used hammermill to grind hog rations. Don said, "They didn't go out and buy a $3,000 grinder-mixer."

The small farm assistant continued, "They aren't waking up in the middle of the night wondering how they're going to make the payments."

"When I started with these pigs, all I had was two sows. I still have those two old red sows," said Bill. "I've just saved gilts and never bought anything but a boar. When you go bringing in sows, you bring in disease. I save all my own breeding stock and go to an individual to buy my boars."

Because they grow most of their feed, the only thing they must buy is protein supplement. "I think you have bigger and healthier pigs when you have sows on supplement," explained Bill. "You can run them out here on ear corn." To cut costs, he also runs them in the clover field.

The Spearses are planning on increasing the number of hogs when they get more fences built. And if Lorraine doesn't go back to work in town they plan to have even more.

After 10 years of working in a factory 30 miles away, Lorraine is glad to be working on the farm. "I don't think I'll go back to it. I make as much money staying home and working with the hogs as I did at the factory. Besides, I handle a mean shovel."

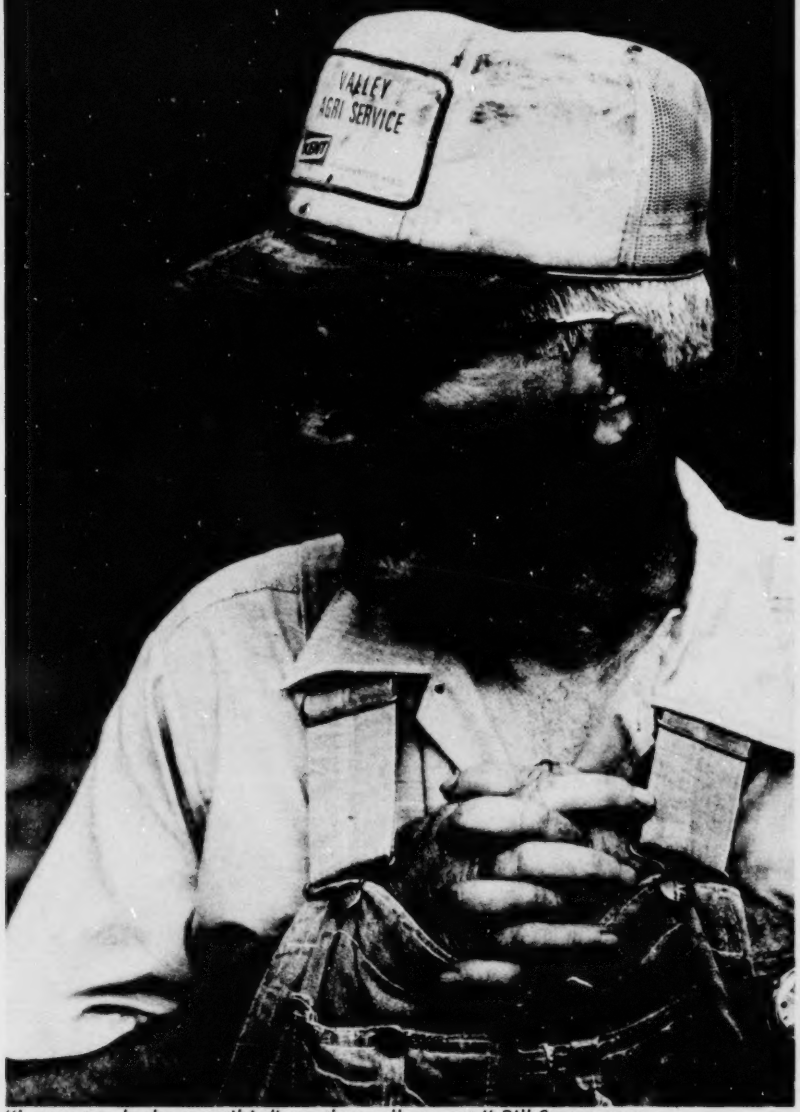
"I do all my own mechanic work," Bill explains. "I've got a garage and do some mechanic work for neighbors, too." Bill originally worked in a garage as a mechanic before he had open-heart surgery 10 years ago. "I go at my own pace now. I can still get a lot done."

After surgery, Bill had trouble getting a job. "Doctors say after five years you shouldn't have any problems—but try to get a job." Then they decided to work for themselves.

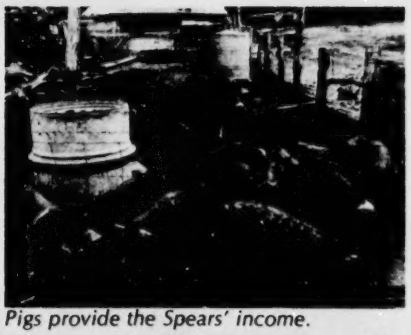
They did their own insulation work on the trailer. By boxing the trailer they have saved a considerable amount on winter heating bills. "No pipes froze in the trailer, as well," Lorraine said.

Bill credits the Small Farm Family Program with helping them get started in farming. "Don found this place. If I hadn't met Don, I wouldn't own this place. It's ideal back here in the timber."

I expect to be here until I die or they sell me out. That's the only way."

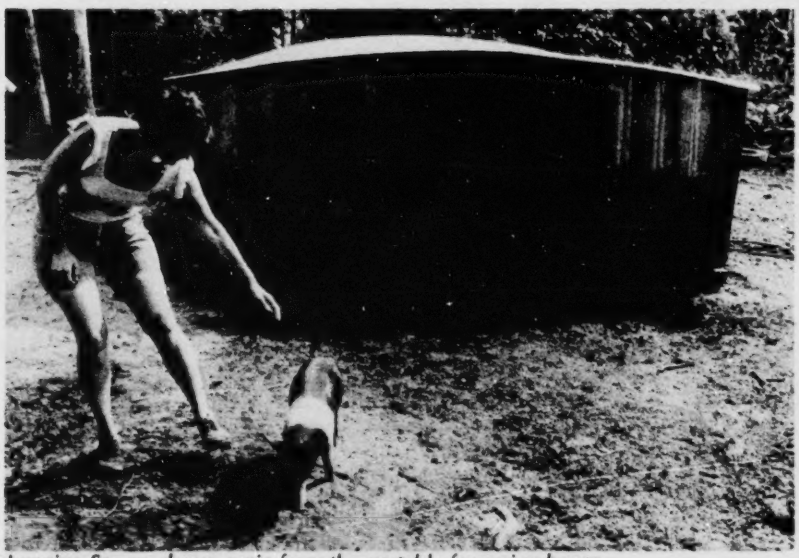


"I expect to be here until I die or they sell me out," Bill Spears says.

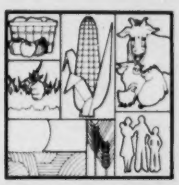


Pigs provide the Spears' income.

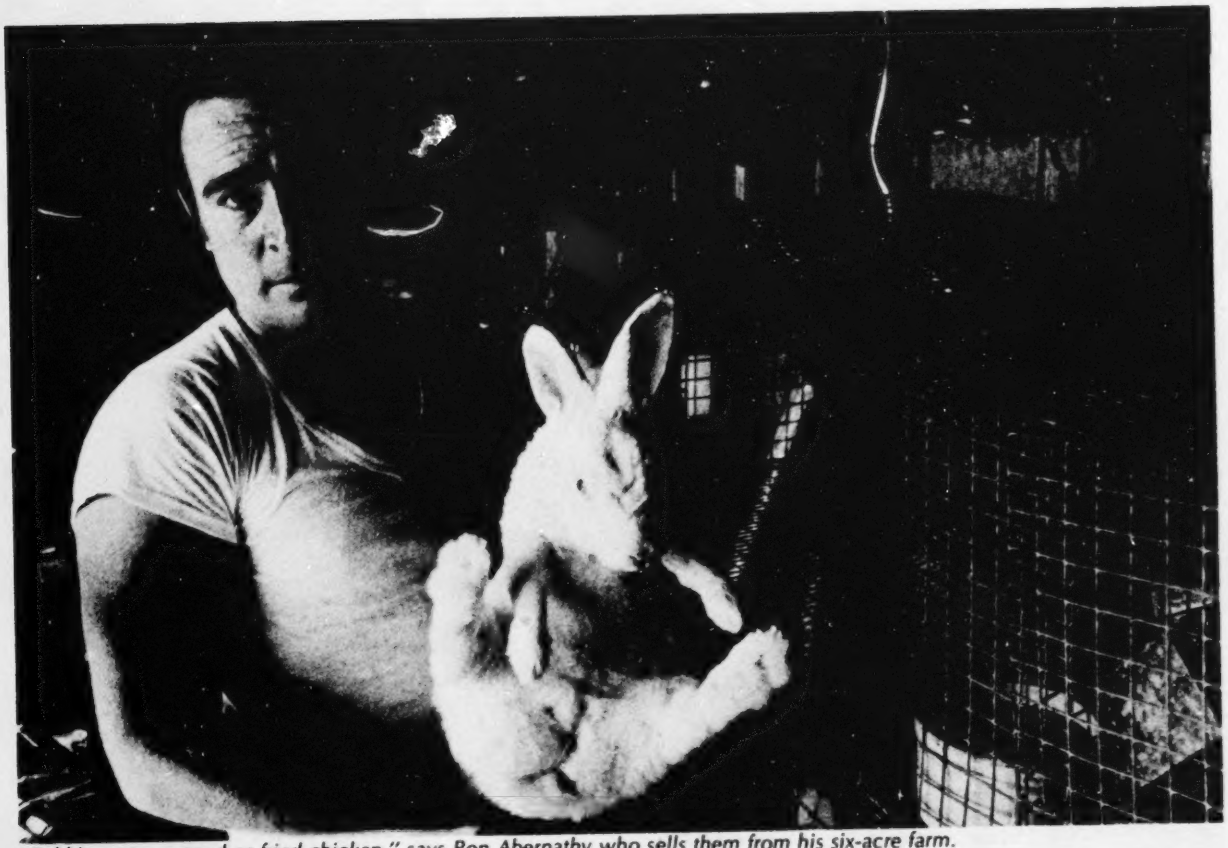
A shallow well was dug to provide water for home and farmstead.



Lorraine Spears chases a pig from the portable farrowing house.



Bill and Lorraine Spears



"Rabbits taste as good as fried chicken," says Ron Abernathy who sells them from his six-acre farm.

Worms, Rabbits, Pigs and Jewelry

Varied Interests Pay Off for Abernathys

Because of an anniversary present Ron and Margaret Abernathy became farmers. The gift was a 40-pound gilt named Sally.

"She made us a thousand dollars profit the first year," said Ron. "And after that we decided we'd better just stay in it for a while and see what happened."

What has started to happen is that they have increased the number of sows to seven and added more livestock—worms and rabbits.

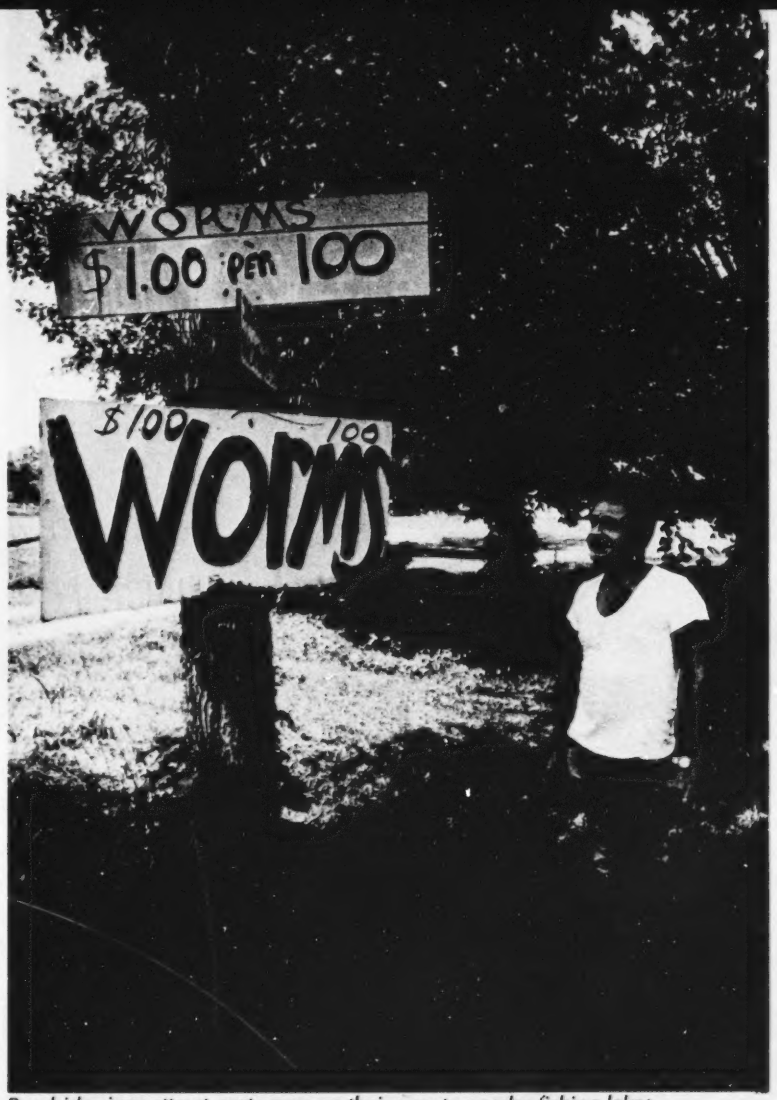
They have six acres near Piedmont, MO, where they have lived for the last seven years. Besides farming they own a jewelry store in town and switch off working on the farm and the store.

The casual beginning doesn't reflect their operation now. They are concerned with disease prevention, better farrowing facilities and improved electric fencing. They plan to handle about 15 sows if they can keep the hog lots clean. Ralph Ross, assistant for the Small Farm Family Program, helped with farming decisions. He told Ron, "As long as you keep the hogs out of the mud, you'll be able to run a lot of hogs in a small area."

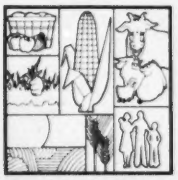
The Abernathys hope to pay the taxes and utilities for the farm business with the income from selling fishing worms.

They started with 10,000 red worms in 1977 along with several rabbits that are housed in cages above the worms. "The rabbits feed the worms and the worms feed the fish," Ron explained. Along with the droppings we add a little laying mash and old newspapers."

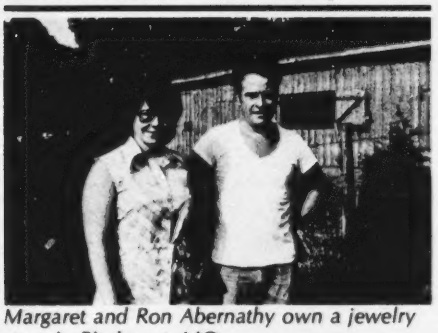
"Intensive care is necessary only twice a year when Margaret changes the bedding. The stock has grown to about 500,000. She also separates the bigger ones. They sell worms for a dollar per hundred. Ron said, "We sell 600 to 800 a week. It doesn't sound like much but it adds up."



Roadside signs attract customers on their way to nearby fishing lakes.



Ron and Margaret Abernathy



Margaret and Ron Abernathy own a jewelry store in Piedmont, MO.

Fish worms are reared in beds under rabbit cages.

They are also looking into other markets for the worms, including selling them to gardeners and selling the worm dirt for fertilizer.

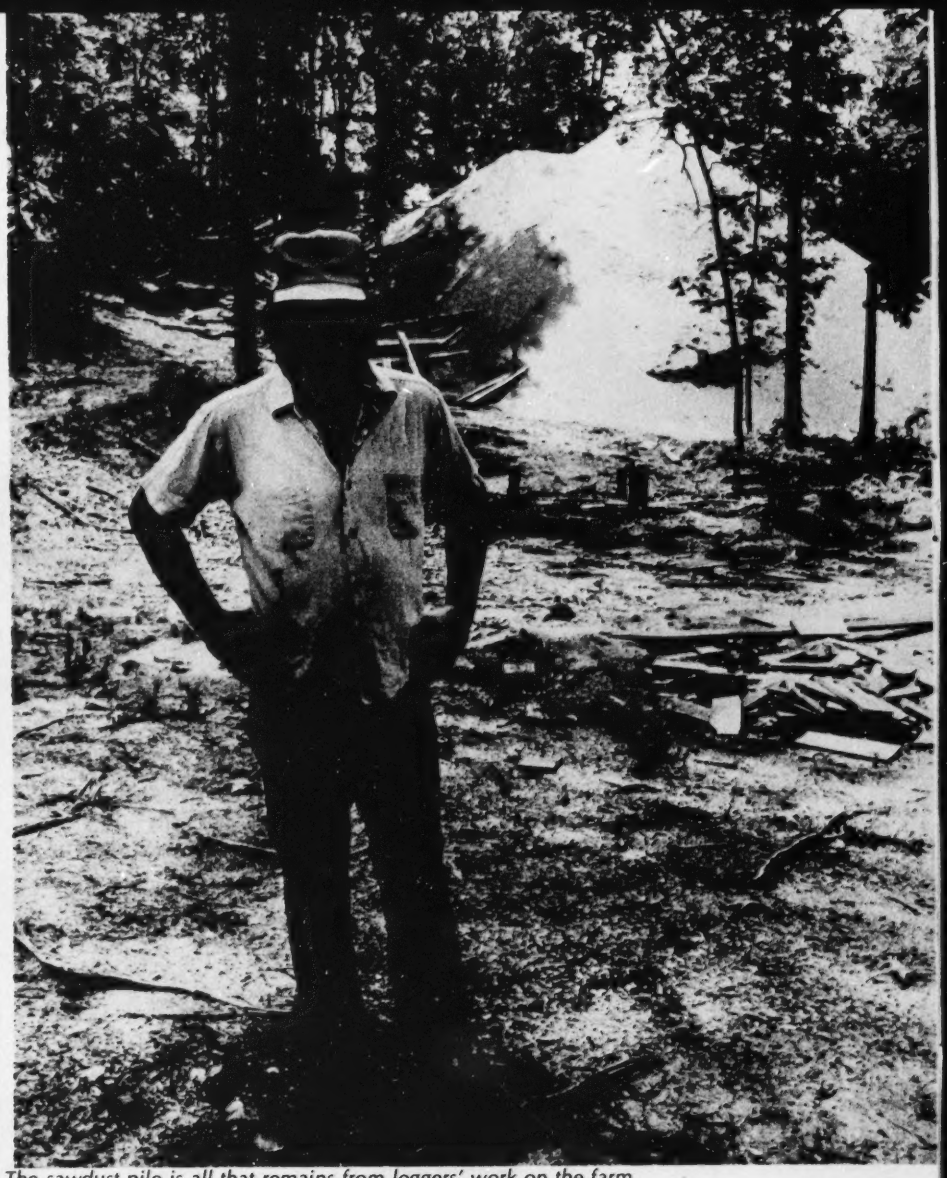
They also sell rabbits. "We probably make 75 cents a rabbit," Ron explained. "People eat them; they're as good as fried chicken. It's easy to sell rabbits, we could sell every one we've got."

To learn about their various operations they read and attend extension meetings. Ron said, "Ralph stops by every week and by the time he leaves, his head is swimming from all the questions we ask him."

Ralph Ross, education assistant, and Ron check his boar.

David and Donna Fonda

This giant maple tree is one of hundreds tapped by Fondas for syrup.



The sawdust pile is all that remains from loggers' work on the farm.

David and Donna Fonda display their private brand of maple syrup–Castor Valley.

Maple Syrup, Greenhouse and Livestock

Fondas Talents Increase Profits

"When we moved to the farm, I didn't plan on making a lot of money and I haven't been disappointed," said David Fonda. But he and his wife Donna have added livestock, built a greenhouse and tapped maple syrup on their 240-acre farm in Bollinger County.

The Fondas decided to move to a farm in 1971 after he got out of the Army. "We saw an ad in the paper, came out and looked at it, and bought it."

They realized they had a good stand of timber, so they sold it off for saw logs. David said, "It paid everything— it paid the place off."

A farm forester recommended cutting only the trees that were 15 inches in diameter or larger and to keep the maple trees for syrup. The loggers moved their operation to the farm in March and completed their work the last of December.

The Fondas have finished

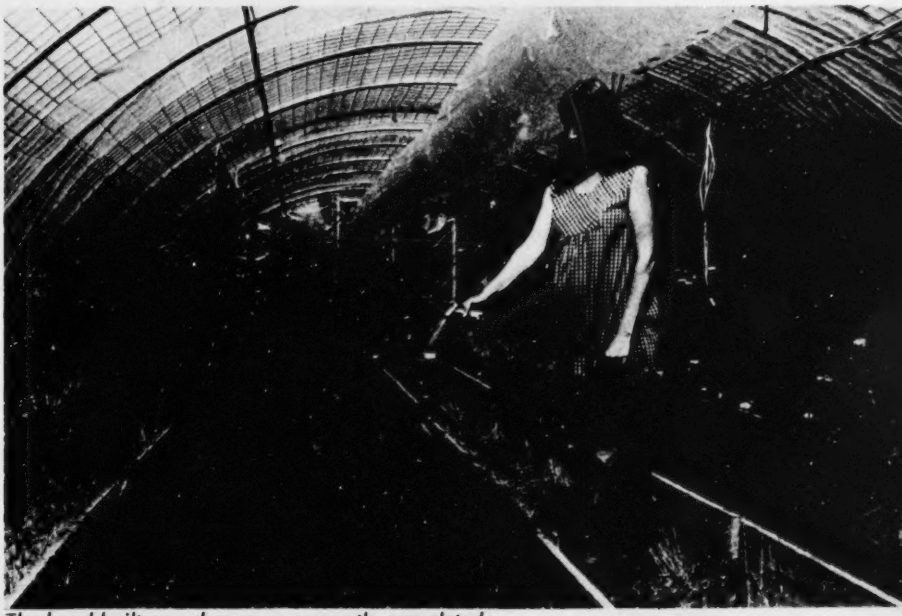
construction of a greenhouse that they built from scratch. After pricing kits at $20,000, they decided they had to put it together themselves. "We bought the frame and then went to a supplier in St. Louis to buy the plastic cover. We bought the fans from even another wholesaler," Mrs. Fonda explained.

"We have a wood furnace that David built, because trying to heat with gas just takes your profit." They hope to raise several varieties of tomatoes and other plants as well.

They buy enough corn and milo in the fall to feed their small herd of cattle and 10 sows for a year. By buying at harvest time, they saved 25 percent of their cost. David made a storage shed for feed out of a grain bed of a truck. He said, "It has a steel bed and hardwood floors. We didn't have any trouble with bugs or rodents because the door goes down real tight."

In February and March the Fondas spent their time collecting sap from the 400 maple trees on their land. The initial costs of tapping is often prohibitive, but they have ingeniously solved some of these problems. Commercial taps cost about $1.45 apiece, so David bought pipe and made his own for about 10 cents each. They also got a roll of plastic tubing and made bags to hold the sap for about 6 cents apiece compared to the regular price of $2.00.

Collecting intervals depended on the size of the trees and the weather. "We often collected twice a day and some days we went around three or four times. Sometimes we didn't have time to do anything but run through the woods," David said.



The hand-built greenhouse was recently completed.

The Fondas have begun to buildup the size of their sow herd.

After the sap is collected it is strained in a large homemade container and cooked down. They put the syrup in pint cans and sell them throughout the area.

Because of their concern over increased food prices the Fondas grow a garden and do much canning. They also have a root cellar.

Construction has begun on a new farrowing house and the pasture is to be improved. After this is completed they plan to increase both the numbers of hogs and cows.

They collect catalogs and write letters to get the information they need for their various operations. They also use the county extension office whenever they can. Gerald Whitener, education assistant for the Small Farm Family program, visits them and originally helped them find their hogs. David said, "He's been a big help with making plans. It's too bad not everyone uses this service."